



Written Statement: U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means,  
Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support:

“Hearing to Review Responsible Fatherhood Programs”

Since 1999, the Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development—now known as the Center for Urban Families—has served Baltimore’s most troubled communities, changing the lives of men, women and their children by connecting them to career paths and strong family models. More than 14,000 individuals have sought our services, many of whom are employed, productive citizens passing their skills on to the next generation and moving closer toward greater upward mobility and self - fulfillment.

CFUF’s fundamental belief is that men who connect with women, their children and the workplace are key to the restoration of stability and optimism in inner - city communities. CFUF stays with its clients for multiple years, because of the understanding that even motivated individuals face hurdles on the path to change that can appear insurmountable without support provided at exactly the right moment. We fulfill our mission with an unwavering focus on addressing the key challenges of Baltimore’s urban families by:

- Striving to create self - sufficient men, women, and families by connecting fathers to their children;
- Creating opportunities for economic and financial security through work; and,
- Supporting the strengthening of Baltimore families.

As a central component of our integrated system for service delivery, the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project’s (BRFP) goals are to increase fathers’ emotional and financial support of their children and families by:

- 1) Improving the acquisition and demonstration of parenting skills,
- 2) Increasing current child support payments,
- 3) Increasing healthy relationships and marriage readiness,
- 4) Increasing client job readiness and employability and,
- 5) Decreasing recidivism and involvement in criminal activities.

### Need for Fatherhood Services (Baltimore, MD)

Significant numbers of low - income fathers in Baltimore City face extraordinary barriers in providing for their children, creating instability for their families and their communities. It is the goal and mission of CFUF to aid each person who passes through our doors to build the skills necessary to surmount these barriers and build healthier, more prosperous lives for themselves and their families. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, Baltimore City is home to over 147,154 families. Over 60% of those households with children under the age of 18 are led by a single parent, who in an overwhelming number of cases is a single mother. According to 2008 data furnished by the Baltimore Data Collaborative, the percent of all families reared in poverty in Baltimore City is 15.8%, more than three times the state average. Even more troubling is the impact of poverty on our children: roughly 28% of youth in Baltimore currently live below the poverty line. Children reared in poor, single female - headed households frequently fail to achieve academically, get into trouble with the law and repeat the cycle of having children out of wedlock and having to fall back on welfare or food stamps to sustain their families. According to the 2000 Census, the median income for Baltimore City was \$30,078, while the median income for the Southern Park Heights, Sandtown/Winchester and Middle East communities – the communities in which many of CFUF’s program participants reside – were \$21,218, \$18,924 and \$14,900, respectively. In the City, competition for low - skilled or living wage employment is very intense. In 2007, Baltimore City had one of the highest unemployment rates in the region, 6.5%, 2.5% above the State unemployment level.

The combination of social and economic pressures provides fertile ground for criminal behavior. In the 2006 Uniform Crime Report, Baltimore ranked #1 for crime incidence and reporting in all of Maryland. As a result, 9,547 Baltimoreans were incarcerated, with roughly 10% women and 90% men. Many of these men were fathers who were unable to pay child support during their incarceration. Also troubling, Baltimore has the highest recidivism rate in Maryland. A majority of Maryland’s ex - offenders return to Baltimore, and more than 50% of them are subsequently re - incarcerated.

When children do not enjoy the economic and emotional resources of both parents, their ability to grow, mature and thrive is impaired. Research shows that the absence of a positive family life is a causal factor for involvement in crime, poor school performance and a willingness to engage in high - risk activities. Children reared in fatherless homes are found more likely to live in poverty, become parents as teenagers, use alcohol or drugs, become involved in criminal and delinquent activities and less likely to complete high school.

Additionally, according to a 2008 report by the Center for Law Social Policy, low - income workers and families have been hardest hit by the recent national economic decline. A recent report states that, “[there] is overwhelming evidence that the employment prospects of low - skilled workers are more sensitive to changing economic conditions than those of high skilled workers. Individuals with limited education and

work experience are more likely to experience declining employment and wages as the labor market weakens.”<sup>1</sup>

The impacts of these trends are often intensified for low - income workers throughout the communities of Baltimore. Given the historical lack of adequate income and social supports for low - income men passing through and below the structures of local and state social welfare, workforce and criminal justice systems<sup>2</sup> devising viable solutions to promote the larger progression of community development and economic empowerment initiatives in Baltimore will mean finding more effective methods of engaging some of our most hard to reach and populations: low - income, black men. In Baltimore, significant rates of low - income fathers in particular, face seemingly insurmountable barriers in providing for their households, creating a cycle of instability and poverty for their children, families and larger communities. Low income fathers typically: 1. earn less than \$8,000 per year, 2. are less likely to work full - time (only 25% report working full-time with a year’s time period, 3. have an employment history dominated by seasonal, temporary, low - wage jobs that do not include benefits, and 4. experience trouble in retaining family sustaining employment.<sup>3</sup>

#### CFUF Responsible Fatherhood Services

At CFUF, we have mastered the strategy of meeting individuals where they are. If their needs are in workforce development, responsible fatherhood, and family services, then that’s what we provide. Through our intensive case management model our staff assists our clients in tackling multiple barriers to success, such as employment, housing, childcare, life skills and criminal histories, all with a core interest in helping each individual progress towards greater personal and professional fulfillment. What makes us unique is our ability to serve our clients through an integrated strategy of wrap around services. It is because of this structure that in addition to the numerous resources made available to our clients through direct enrollment in the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood program, each participant is provided access to a number of comprehensive internal supports. The following synopsis provides an overview of these additional program areas:

**STRIVE Baltimore.** The hallmark STRIVE Baltimore program is an intensive job readiness workshop based on an attitudinal approach developed in East Harlem, NY. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Jim Hines, Hilary Hoynes, and Alan Krueger. “Another Look at Whether a Rising Tide Lifts All Boats,” *The Roaring Nineties: Can Full Employment Be Sustained?*, Russell Sage Foundation, 2001; and, Henry S. Farber. *Job Loss and the Decline in Job Security in the United States*, Working Paper #520, September, 2007, as cited by Elizabeth Lower- Basch, Matt Lewis and Neil Ridley. “Low- Income Workers and Families Hardest Hit by Economic Decline Need Help Now,” Center for Law and Social Policy, June 9, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> According to a report by the Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-Being, “Social welfare policy has historically concentrated on the needs of low- income women and children, largely to the exclusion of low- income single adult men. Berlin, 2007 as cited in “Reforming the EITC: What Can be Done for Low- Income Non- Custodial Fathers). Serena Klempin.

<sup>3</sup> Connecting Low - Income Fathers and Families: A Guide to Practical Policies, National Conference of State Legislators, 2000. Pg. 2.

three - week training blends self - examination, critical thinking, relationship building, affirmation and practical skills development. With the goal of further developing this model to meet the evolving needs our client base, CFUF staff has additionally begun to explore opportunities for infusing hard skills training into the STRIVE Baltimore model, including Microsoft Office certification, along with other programs including providing GED training for participants. STRIVE Baltimore celebrates 10 years of serving Baltimore City residents and employers in the metropolitan region. STRIVE historically placed 75% of graduates into employment opportunities with an average wage of \$9.29 per hour.

**Career Path.** The Career Path program is designed to assist men and women in Baltimore, with gaining the skills needed to attain family - sustaining wages. The program employs a targeted employer approach, partnering with local corporations to fill job slots with qualified candidates. Through the Career Path model, participants receive access to better job opportunities; and, employers are in turn able to reduce recruitment and attrition costs, while gaining trained and motivated employees. The Career Path design supports STRIVE graduates in moving beyond entry - level employment, through the implementation of a post - secondary certified occupational training model. Because Career Path participants will have completed the STRIVE Baltimore program in full, employers can be assured that graduates not only have advanced technical skills, but also possess highly desirable soft skills including a positive and motivated attitude, the ability to work well in a team, familiarity with workplace culture and systems, and a thorough knowledge of proper workplace behavior. Further, the Career Path program emphasizes the importance of a positive attitude in creating a supportive network that promotes career advancement.

**Couples Employment.** The Couples Employment program focuses specifically on providing employment development and case management services to couples. This intervention explores what is needed to effectively assist fathers and mothers in active couple relationships who have decided to face employment challenges together. The program's concentrated focus is to target couples that have previously enrolled in the Baltimore Building Strong Families program as well as couples who have not received any previous couple's education (such as STRIVE participants actively engaged in a relationship). Program staff instructs clients and provides them with the essential tools needed for their success in the workplace and in society. With the help of an employment specialist, participants develop a written employment plan, learn what is needed to compete in the job market, and attend couples - focused group sessions focusing on employment, financial literacy, and gaining economic stability.

**Baltimore Building Strong Families (BSF).** Comprised of both programmatic as well as research components, this program seeks to enhance child development through the following goals: helping expecting and unwed couples (18 and older) strengthen their relationship, and, supporting healthy marriage if couples choose to wed. The BSF core purpose is to implement and test intervention to enhance the prospect for the child's positive development. BSF recruits low - income participants through referral, outreach,

and existing partnerships. These agencies consist of OB/GYN clinics and hospitals that offer services such as pregnancy testing, pregnancy classes, and prenatal services. Under the BSF model, weekly group sessions are conducted by professionally qualified facilitators, with each serving 5 - 8 couples at a time, over a period of 4 - 5 months. The BSF curriculum focuses on developing skills, rather than therapy or counseling; and, as a result, it consists of workshops dedicated to topics ranging from how to communicate effectively as a couple, to preserving intimacy and friendship and developing strong relationships with the child.

### **BRFP Outcomes and Impact**

#### *Service Needs of BRFP Participants*

A process analysis<sup>4</sup> of BRFP which included document reviews, interviews with staff and participants, observation of program sessions, and a review of CFUF's data management system, found that child support assistance is one of the main reasons men enroll in the fatherhood program. Of the nine participants who were interviewed, eight were currently struggling with child support arrears, ranging from \$1,000 - \$35,000. The ninth had recently closed his child support case after the mother forgave \$20,000 owed to her and he paid back \$12,000 in arrears owed to the state.

BRFP staff consistently identified the large amount of child support arrears participants owed as one of the biggest barriers the men were facing. Case managers began to address the arrears by first helping participants understand the child support system through individual case management and through the child support workshop. Many of the participants interviewed described difficulties they encountered because they did not understand the system. For example, before enrolling in BRFP, one participant lied and told a child support judge he was working full time, making up an hourly wage, simply because he did not know that he could tell the judge he was unemployed and that the judge could take unemployment into account when setting the child support order.

Additionally, BRFP staff note that many participants were unaware of how much child support they owed when they enrolled in the program. For example, one interview participant was unaware of how serious his child support situation had become until a sheriff hand-delivered a court summons. All of the previous letters from the office of child support enforcement had been mailed to an address where the participant no longer lived. BRFP case managers help participants maintain awareness of their child support cases by helping them register in Maryland's E-Child Support system, where they can view the current amount owed, as well as total arrears and a payment history for the previous six months.

Incarceration and unstable employment were the main reasons that the participants whom we interviewed identified for being unable to pay child support. They all stated that they were able to pay consistently while they were employed, particularly once wage

---

<sup>4</sup> Ronald B. Mincy, PhD, Serena Klempin, MSW. (2009) Process Analysis: Child Support Intervention Services with African American Men: The Center for Urban Families' Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Program. Conducted by the Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-Being.

withholding took effect. Hence BRFP's strong focus on employment is crucial to achieving its child support goals. Additionally, participants highly value the employment services. Several of the participants who were unemployed at the time of the interviews indicated that they were more concerned about managing their child support through finding employment than through other methods, such as attempting to file a petition for modification. Nonetheless, they appreciated the information they were gaining about child support through their case managers and through BRFP sessions. For example, some participants assumed that if they could not afford to pay their entire child support obligation for the month it was not worth paying anything. After learning that it was worthwhile to pay something, however small, to demonstrate that they were making an effort to pay, they were relieved to find that child support enforcement tended to "get off their back."

The process analysis concluded that overall, the BRFP seems to be successfully targeting essential child support service needs by focusing on understanding the child support system in general, maintaining awareness of individual orders, and emphasizing the importance of employment.

#### *Participant Experience with BRFP Services*

Additionally all participants who were interviewed during the process analysis unequivocally expressed satisfaction with the BRFP services. What they appreciated most were the relationships they formed with BRFP staff and fellow participants – some even called them "like family." Several participants described that the program fills a need unmet anywhere else. As one participant stated, "There are not a lot of options for men like me out there." Participants also stated that they had learned a great deal about the child support system, both from the BRFP case managers, and from other participant.

Beyond offering a source of support and information, the BRFP also appears to be having a real impact on participants' child support payments and their relationships with their families. The participant whom we interviewed who had just closed his child support case was able to do so because BRFP case managers had counseled him to become involved with his children and later to discuss the case with the child's mother. As a result, she forgave \$20,000 worth of child support owed to her. The participant was also able to obtain a job through CFUF, which enabled him to pay off the remaining \$12,000 owed to the state. Another participant began his interview by offering a written statement he had prepared about the program. In it he stated, "Mr. White and Mr. Pitchford have been instrumental in helping me to get my child support issues in perspective from the modification aspect to the visitation rights. By talking with Mr. Pitchford and Mr. White and the group in general and sharing my situations that I encounter while dealing with my family they... help me to make proper judgment calls. Now as of today I can honestly say that I have a healthy relationship with them both (ex-wife and son). My ex-wife trusts me enough to take my son out – unsupervised."

### **Program Activities & Accomplishments (May 1, 2008-April 30, 2009)**

A recent evaluation<sup>5</sup> of BRFP services provided during a grant period extending from May 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009 provides outcome details in the following areas: Projected Measureable Outcomes; Actual Measureable Outcomes; and a Successful Graduate Overview.

#### ***Projected Measureable Outcomes:***

<i>Yearly Objectives</i>
Recruit 100 participants
Enroll 75 participants
Complete 40 participants
80% of participants with outstanding child support orders will be connected to the e-child support system
100% of completing participants will complete a pre/post assessment
100% of unemployed participants will be referred to our workforce development program for intense Job readiness training
100% of successful completers will maintain a 90% attendance rate to curriculum class.
100% of successful completers will attend 4 skills-based workshops
56% of the successful completers will receive job placement

#### ***Actual Measureable Outcomes:***

• Recruited	122
• Enrolled	98
• Successful Graduates	40
• Enrolled in E-Child Support*	42
• Graduated from STRIVE	51
• Initial Placements	37

\*53 of the 98 enrolled fathers had outstanding child support debt, and 42 were enrolled in the E-Child Support Program.

#### ***Successful Graduate Overview\*:***

• Graduated from STRIVE	38
• Initial Job Placements	21
• Owe Child Support Debt	20
• Enrolled in E-Child Support	17
• Employed & Owes Child Support	13
• Average Debt of Employed Client	\$6,523.24
• Average Debt of Unemployed Client	\$10,676.47
• Total of Children Represented	96

---

<sup>5</sup> Page Hinerman (2009). **Final Report to the Open Society Institute:** May 1, 2008 –April 30, 2009  
*Advancing Responsible Fatherhood Initiative*

### **Direct Services**

A main focus of the BRFP is providing a) curriculum-based group sessions, b) intense case management and, c) advocacy services to African-American males living in low-income communities of Baltimore City. The organization's overall responsible fatherhood and workforce development strategies represent the intersection between policy and practice. Targeting fathers with children ages 0-13 years, the BRFP staff was able to recruit fathers, out of the final goal of 100 fathers.

A. Curriculum-Based Group Sessions- The program delivered the Fatherhood curriculum session in four 3 hour session per month. Due to the success of our father in workforce activities the session were provided in the evenings with a participant having the ability to "make-up" a session if missed for work related reasons and also provides a Skills-Based workshop once per month in the evenings. Our final group session is a once per month support group, intended to allow all the fathers that we are working with, whether in the cohort or not, to come together and discuss relevant topics around working, parenting and relationship maintenance.

B. Advanced Case Management- In an effort to provide the highest level of case management and client advocacy the five major outcome measures are recorded in each of the case management sessions. As the participant and Fatherhood Specialist developed the needed plan of services, to assist the participant with his needs, these areas continued to guide and measure the success of the participant's efforts.

**Outcome Measurement 1: Decrease recidivism and involvement in criminal activities.** Employing a scale of measure, 0 (high risk) – 4 (no risk) to determine the potential of a participant to return to the criminal justice system, Fatherhood Specialists dedicated over 60 hours of case management support. During this granting period, Fatherhood Specialists hosted a group outing with the focus on personal responsibility to avoid criminal behavior, and created a group bond and cohesiveness among the fathers. The following is the progress chart for the 40 fathers that successfully completed the program:

#### Fathers who showed no change from initial assessment:

- 1 (moderate risk) - 1 Father
- 2 (risk) - 14 Fathers
- 3 (low risk) - 1 Father
- 4 (no risk) - 3 Fathers

#### Fathers who showed a positive change from initial assessment:

- 1 (moderate risk) to 3 (low) - 2 Fathers
- 1 (moderate risk) to 4 (no risk) - 1 Father
- 2 (risk) to 3 (low risk) - 15 Fathers
- 2 (risk) to 4 (no risk) - 2 Fathers
- 3 (low risk) to 4 (no risk) - 1 Fathers



**Outcome Measurement 2: Improve acquisition and demonstration of parenting skills.** Under this program outcome measurement, the goal was to assess the level of parental skill, desire, and commitment to the child. A measurement scale of 0 (uninterested/no skills) – 4 (involved/excellent skills) determined the level of need for that specific father. BRFP Fatherhood Specialists spent over 58 hours, in case management service. During this granting period, the fathers were taken on two group outings, with their children, in order for the fathers to utilize the parenting skills developed by this portion of the program. Fathers and their children participated in the activity through a group outing to the National Aquarium and the Port Discovery Children's Museum. The following is the progress chart for the 40 fathers that successfully completed the program:

Fathers who showed no change from initial assessment:

2 (Motivated/Gained Some Parenting Skills) - 18 fathers

3 (Active Father/Utilizing Parenting Skills/Established Strong Relationship) - 8 Fathers

Fathers who showed a positive change from initial assessment:

1 (Non-Compliant Father) to 2 (Motivated Father) – 1 Father

1 (Non-Compliant Father) to 3 (Active Father) – 1 Father

2 (Motivated Father) to 3 (Active Father) - 10 fathers

3 (Active Father) to 4 (Exceptional Father) - 2 fathers

**Outcome Measurement 3: Increase client job readiness and employability.**

In order to establish the employability of the fathers, this program outcome measurement is designed to rate the fathers from their level of motivation to workforce skills. To determine the level of job readiness for the fathers, a measureable scale of 0 (unmotivated) to 4 (job ready) was utilized. BRFP Fatherhood Specialists spent over 64 hours in case management service. An additional incentive to help motivate the fathers to be job-ready, the program committed to taking the fathers and their families for a movie night, if they successfully completed the STRIVE program, as well as displayed exceptional improvement on their employability skills. The following is the progress chart for the 40 fathers that successfully completed the program: Month four of the Cohort theme is: Employment Readiness

Fathers who showed no change from initial assessment

2 (Beginning Pre-Employment Activities/Learning Job Search Techniques) – 9 Fathers

3 (Applying Job Skills/Acquired Work Values/Has Begun Job Search) - 6 Fathers

4 (Job Ready/Possess Skills and Attitude/Actively Seeking Employment) - 7 Fathers

Fathers who showed a positive change from initial assessment

0 (Unmotivated) to 4 (Job Ready/Actively Seeking Employment) – 1 Father

1 (Interested in Employment) to 3 (Applying Job Skills/Has Begun Job Search) – 2 Fathers

2 (Beginning Pre-Employment Activities) to 3 (Applying Job Skills) - 3 Fathers

2 (Beginning Pre-Employment Activities) to 4 (Job Ready) 5 Fathers

3 (Applying Job Skills) to 4 (Job Ready) - 7 Fathers

**Outcome Measure 4: Increase current child support payments.**

During the granting period, from the 98 enrolled fathers, there were a total of 53 fathers who had outstanding child support payments, and 42 of them were successfully enrolled in the E-Child Support Program. Over the period we have been able to monitor the last 6 months of the fathers payments and at the writing of this report only 6 of our completers have fell behind in their current payments due to unemployment. All six (6) have begun the modification process.

**Outcome Measure 5: Increase healthy relationship skills and marriage readiness.**

All 40 of the successful graduates have gone through the healthy relationship and marriage sessions of the curriculum, and all of them participated in the skills building “Parenting” workshop. Each father was continuously encouraged to use the skills learned during group sessions, while interacting with their children. In conjunction, the program sponsored monthly activities to give the Fatherhood Specialists the opportunity to monitor the fathers while interacting with their children. Additional activities that incorporated healthy marriage activities, outside of the classroom, included hosting the fathers, with their significant other, at a local restaurant and gave the couples the opportunity to use promising relationship skills taught during this month of the program.

***Final Remarks*** provided in the process analysis state that by all accounts BRFP is doing meaningful work that positively impacts participants. It is hoped that this evaluation will benefit not only CFUF as it seeks to document the effectiveness of its services and inform responsible fatherhood policy, but also the field of responsible fatherhood as a whole, including the child support enforcement agencies with which it works.

## Appendix A: Child Support Program Theory

